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Nicaragua: Report On Reactions To Decisions By National Council On Granting Legal Status To New Parties

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On May 17, the National Council of Political Parties granted legal status to five new parties, and denied it to five others. The Council is comprised of four Sandinistas and four opposition representatives. The Central American Integrationist Party (PIAC) was denied for conduct which bordered on the surreal. When it was noted that PIAC's name and statement of principles too closely resembled those of the Central American Unification Party (PUCA), the applicants held an impromptu meeting on the patio of the Council offices and decided on the "Ecologist Party" as a new name. Council members also received messages from individuals listed as PIAC executive members who denied any affiliation with the group. A extreme-rightist conservative group led by Silvio Matamoros was denied legal status because its party statutes defended foreign intervention in the event a "government does not respect the principles of western democracy." The Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN) and the Social Conservative Party, led by Alfonso Robelo and Fernando Aguero respectively, were granted legal status. Both Robelo and Aguero have held positions on the directorate of the Nicaraguan Resistance. The only vote by the Council against the legalization of these two parties was cast by the representative of the Marxist-Leninist Party (MAP-ML). According to MAP-ML secretary general Isidro Tellez, "These organizations boast of the crimes committed by their mercenary troops against our youth and the campesinos...They have the ability to order more crimes." He said his party would appeal the Council ruling. Perhaps the most controversial ruling was the denial of legal status to the Christian Democratic Party, a Social Christian faction headed by Agustin Jarquin. The Council ruled that its statutes and party emblem were not sufficiently distinct from Erick Ramirez's Social Christian Party (PSC), recognized by the Christian Democratic International. Jarquin, however, controls the party's large and radical youth organization and a political study institute which receives funds from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of the West German Christian Democratic Party. Jarquin blamed Sandinistas on the Council for blocking his group's legalization. However, others in the Social Christian "family" noted that they also opposed Jarquin's gambit because voters would be confused if faced with a choice between groups with similar names and emblems. The officially recognized faction has a blue flag with the white outline of a fish in the center. The Jarquin faction's flag was blue with two fish in its center. Yet another faction had proposed a blue flag with four fish surrounding a cross to symbolize Social Christian unity. The "Group of 14" (15 at present) is calling for the resumption of a "national dialogue" with the government to demand more changes to electoral and media legislation. If their demand is not granted, the group of parties has threatened to boycott the February elections. (Basic data from 05/28/89 report by Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua)

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